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The Portuguese Revolutionary Council

Jun 75

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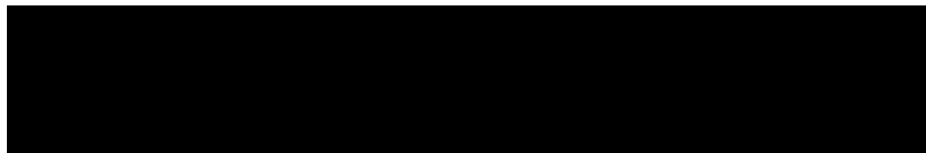
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PREFACE

In the year since its coup on 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement (AFM), the group of young military officers that overthrew the authoritarian regime of Prime Minister Marcello Caetano, has been increasing its role in the governmental process. On 15 March 1975, after an unsuccessful rightwing military coup, the AFM decided to consolidate its powers further. It created the Revolutionary Council, a 24-man military body, and granted it wide-ranging governmental powers. The Council, whose membership was later increased in March to 28 and in May to 29, is the top decisionmaking group within the AFM and has extensive legislative, executive and judicial powers.

In April 1975 the role of the Revolutionary Council was further defined in the AFM's draft of the "Platform of Understanding." The platform, which was presented to and accepted by the major political parties, sets forth basic constitutional tenets for the transitional period of the next 3 to 5 years. It provides that key executive, legislative and judicial powers will be reserved for the Revolutionary Council. The Council will define the general lines of domestic and foreign policy, approve legislative acts of both the elected Legislative Assembly and the Cabinet, and determine the constitutionality of laws. In addition, the Revolutionary Council will control the selection of the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Defense, Internal Administration and Economic Planning. Although the Legislative Assembly theoretically will have the power to force a change in the Cabinet with a vote of "no confidence" and to override a Revolutionary Council veto with a two-thirds majority vote, the Legislative Assembly can be dissolved at any time by the President in consultation with the Revolutionary Council.

The average age of the members of the Revolutionary Council is about 38. Five members are believed to be in their mid-twenties, 13 are in their thirties, eight in their forties, two in their fifties and only one, President Francisco da Costa Gomes, is 60. The Revolutionary Council is made up of 16 army, seven air force and six naval officers. Original membership on the Council was dependent upon membership in other AFM committees or high governmental posts and included: the President of the country as chairman, the Prime Minister, the deputy commander of the Continental Operations Command, the members of the now defunct Junta of National Salvation (the AFM's original seven-man ruling body), seven members of the AFM's Coordinating Committee and, finally, representatives appointed by the

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AFM—four army officers, two air force officers and two navy officers. Membership was increased by four when Adm. Vitor Crespo, High Commissioner in Mozambique, convinced the AFM that he and three other high-level officials and original members of the AFM should not be excluded from the Council. The influence of three of these men is minimized by a regulation that prohibits full participation in Council proceedings by members who hold other high government positions.

In May 1975 the AFM accused Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Mendes Dias and his Deputy Chief of Staff, Gen. Aníbal Pinho Freire, both known as moderates, of having been "command deficient" during the attempted coup 2 months earlier. The two men then resigned their respective posts. They were replaced by Gen. José da Silva Moraes and Gen. Jorge Emilo da Silva Manaças, officers of less moderate political views. In addition, Brig. Eurico Corvacho, commander of the Northern Military Region, joined the Revolutionary Council in late May 1975. With his appointment, the commanders of Portugal's four military regions are all included on the Council.

All of the members of the Revolutionary Council are professional military officers; most of them have served at some time during their careers in the former Portuguese African colonies, where they developed their political philosophies as a result of contacts with various liberation groups. In fact, one observer has stated that the 25 April 1974 coup was organized on a cell pattern borrowed from the Mozambique Liberation Front.

On the whole, the members of the Revolutionary Council are idealistic and favor the establishment of a type of socialism that is molded to Portuguese needs. The Council has given assurances that it will observe all international commitments, and it has indicated a desire to establish strong ties with the Third World, especially with its former colonies.

The political orientation within the Revolutionary Council is not clearly defined, but some observers see at least three centers of power based on distinct political philosophies. The radicals appear to be led by Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves, who is considered to be strongly influenced by the Communists. The radicals are the most powerful group and have demonstrated their strength within the Revolutionary Council by pushing through measures calling for rapid nationalization of banks, insurance companies and major industries.

A second center of power is made up of moderates and is believed to include President da Costa Gomes, Foreign Minister Ernesto Melo de Antunes, and Maj. Vitor Alves. This group is socialist in inclination, but moderate in outlook. A third power center is believed to be led by Adm. António Rosa Coutinho. This group favors the development of a specifically Portuguese brand of socialism and the establishment of a new socialist party that would be ideologically between the existing Communist and Socialist Parties. In effect, this party would be a civilian arm of the AFM. The victory

of the moderate political parties in the Constituent Assembly elections, held in April 1975, may have increased the strength of the moderates within the Revolutionary Council.

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The Revolutionary Council

THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL

Chairman: Gen. Francisco da Costa Gomes (Army)

Executive Director: Adm. António Rosa Coutinho (Navy)

Maj. Vitor Alves (Army)

Maj. Ernesto de Melo Antunes (Army)

Adm. José Pinheiro de Azevedo (Navy)

Gen. Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho (Army)

Maj. José de Canto e Castro (Air Force)

Capt. Rodrigo de Sousa Castro (Army)

Brig. Manuel Charais (Army)

Lt. Cdr. Carlos de Almada Contreiras (Navy)

Brig. Pedro de Peserat Correia (Army)

Lt. Ramiro Pedroso Correia (Navy)

Brig. Eurico de Deus Corvacho (Army)

Capt. José da Costa Martins (Air Force)

Adm. Vitor Crespo (Navy)

Capt. Vitor Graça Cunha (Air Force)

Gen. Carlos Soares Fabião (Army)

Gen. Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves (Army)

Cdr. Manuel Martins Guerreiro (Navy)

Lt. José Manuel Judas (Navy)

Lt. António Marques Junior (Army)

Capt. Vasco Correia Lourenço (Army)

Capt. Luís Ferreira de Macedo (Army)

Gen. Jorge da Silva Manaças (Air Force)

Gen. José Morais da Silva (Air Force)

Maj. José Costa Neves (Air Force)

Maj. José Pereira Pinto (Air Force)

Gen. Nuno Lopes Pires (Army)

Gen. Duarte Pinto Soares (Army)

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